

# Documents on Diplomacy: Exercises

## A Call to War

### GROUP D INSTRUCTIONS

1. Read background information about negotiations between Japan and the United States prior to and on the day of December 7, 1941.
2. Be prepared to brief the class about these actions.
3. Become familiar with FDR's speech, *A Date Which Will Live in Infamy* and the *Declaration of War* by the U.S. Congress.
4. Listen to Roosevelt's speech and be sure you understand vocabulary and phrases.
5. Set up technology to play the speech for the class once Groups A, B, and C have presented their dialogs.
6. Create a solemn atmosphere for the playing of the speech.
7. Immediately after the President's speech, have someone in Group D dramatically read the *Declaration of War* by the U.S. Congress.
8. Quietly return to your seats.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The decision to run for a third term was a difficult one for Franklin D. Roosevelt. He knew a third term would be unprecedented in American history, and his eight years in office made the thought of returning to his lifelong home in Hyde Park, New York—and his new presidential library—attractive.

On the other hand, FDR was profoundly concerned about world events. Germany's Hitler was relentlessly overrunning Europe, and the nation's relationship with Imperial Japan continued to deteriorate.

In the end, Roosevelt felt he owed it to the country to serve the best way he could, and the best thing for the country then was a vigorous, seasoned leader.

The ominous wartime situation in Europe—and the implication of even darker times ahead—convinced many Americans that Roosevelt should stay on. Others were equally convinced that Roosevelt's third term would signal American acceptance of a dictatorship. Still others were disturbed by Roosevelt's apparent dismissal of tradition—no president had ever run for a third term. Nevertheless, he was re-elected and then inaugurated in January 1941.

#### *A Dark Horizon*

Roosevelt conferred with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill aboard a cruiser anchored off Newfoundland, in August 1941. The two statesmen crafted a proclamation that became known as *The Atlantic*

*Charter*. They vowed not to pursue gains "territorial or otherwise," to honor the right of every country to determine its own form of government, to ensure freedom of the seas, and to carry on peaceful global trade.

Roosevelt delivered a speech on January 6, 1941, in which he declared that all people are entitled to freedom of speech and worship and freedom from want and fear. The speech became famous and those fundamental rights came to be called the *Four Freedoms*.

On March 11 of that year, Congress passed the Lend-Lease Act, which allowed the government to supply war material to any country at war with the Axis powers. Britain became the main recipient.

Ominously, Germany, Italy, and Japan had signed a mutual aid pact in 1940. Relations with the Japanese Empire became progressively edgy. Beginning in 1941, the United States attempted to stem Japanese predation in Southeast Asia by cutting back trade with Japan, and posting periodic warnings. Roosevelt characterized the tactic as "babying the Japanese along."

On Sunday, December 7, 1941, two Japanese diplomats met with Secretary of State Cordell Hull in Washington, D.C. While they conferred, faraway Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, became the target of a sudden attack of Japanese aircraft that mauled the U.S. Pacific Fleet lying at anchor there.

President Roosevelt stood before a riveted Congress the following day and asserted that December 7 was “a date which will live in infamy.” Almost immediately, the United States declared war against Japan. On December 11, Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. In turn, the United States declared war on those nations.

In later years, allegations were voiced that Roosevelt should have been held accountable for negligence at Pearl Harbor—even for engineering America’s entry into the war—but historians differ over the soundness of those assertions. Roosevelt was, nevertheless, responsible to a considerable degree for the swift expansion of American military power.

He was a dynamic world leader who stood against everything the Axis powers stood for. He was heavily involved in diplomacy. There was no dissension within the United States regarding foreign policy, and the wartime presidential election was again focused largely on domestic themes.

Most Americans understood that their country faced a grave state of affairs, spanning both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. They comprehended the notion of a two-front war. The U.S. Navy had been mangled by the assault on Pearl Harbor. On the other hand, the draft had provided the U.S. Army more than a million men who then received at least a year’s combat training.

<http://www.u-s-history.com/pages/h1662.html>

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

<http://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/day-of-infamy/>

<http://abcclio.blogspot.com/2010/12/pearl-harbor-attack-1941.html>

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Events\\_leading\\_to\\_the\\_attack\\_on\\_Pearl\\_Harbor](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Events_leading_to_the_attack_on_Pearl_Harbor)

### Audio of speech:

[http://www.archive.org/details/FDR\\_Declares\\_War\\_19411208](http://www.archive.org/details/FDR_Declares_War_19411208)